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Expeditions

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ROBERT COLLINS

Expeditions

" At the sight of nothing, the soul rejoices."
—Thomas Moore

You have to give up the whole
world in order to get here,
forsake all hope of rescue
to enter total whiteness
and chart the bleak interior
where the wind's cold chisel
carves enormous cathedrals.

Purity is that frigid.

If spirit trapped only in ice
to keep it from total freedom
can be this blinding and cold,
think how lethal and brilliant
the disembodied soul must be.

You would not want to encounter
such a being even in heaven
if a place more empty exists.
That's why extremities go numb,
flesh blackens and breaks down
from even the slightest exposure.

What enormous need compels
the well traveled explorer to sail
through storm-plagued straits
and land along desolate coasts
where visibility's always zero?

You wouldn't attempt such a journey
unless you absolutely had to.

Inundated by ice and spooked
by ghosts of unfurling auroras,
those who manage to survive
discover an untrammeled country,
blank as paradise before the fall,
where everything is waiting to be named.